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# PRESS RELEASE

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## **Attorney General Frosh Announces 2022 Legislative Priorities *Agenda Focused on Public Safety, Environmental Protection, Reducing Eviction Filings, and Protecting Employees from Wage Theft***

**BALTIMORE, MD (January 10, 2022)** – Maryland Attorney General Brian E. Frosh today announced his priority legislation for the 2022 General Assembly session, initiatives aimed at eliminating the danger posed by ghost guns; strengthening the State’s authority to enforce environmental laws; protecting tenants from serial eviction filings; and protecting employees from wage theft.

“Our legislative agenda is focused on protecting the health and safety of Marylanders and of our environment,” said Attorney General Frosh. “Our proposals eliminate the dangerous and growing threat of ghost guns, bolster efforts to protect our drinking water, protect hardworking employees from becoming victims of wage theft, and provide additional protections for tenants against unscrupulous landlords.”

Attorney General Frosh’s 2022 legislative priorities include:

- **Ghost Gun Ban:** To address the rapidly growing problem of criminals utilizing unserialized “ghost guns,” this legislation bans ghost guns in Maryland by clarifying the definition of “firearm.” Unless otherwise explicitly exempted by the statute, the bill prohibits possession of ghost guns after January 1, 2023. Violations of the law, as amended by the bill, can result in imprisonment not exceeding 3 years, a fine not exceeding \$10,000, or both.
- **Increased Filing Fee for Landlord-Tenant Actions:** This legislation increases the filing fee in eviction actions to make it more consistent with the fees charged to file for eviction in other states. Maryland’s \$15 charge to file an eviction is one of the lowest fees charged across the nation, and at 92.5%, has one of the highest eviction filing rates nationally. The bill also prohibits courts and landlords from passing these increased surcharges on to residential tenants.
- **Comprehensive Environmental Enforcement Legislation:** The State’s authority to enforce laws governing safe drinking water, wastewater facility operation, waterway construction and dam safety, and tidal and nontidal wetlands is unduly restricted. This

bill will amend the law to allow the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) to pursue injunctive relief, administrative and civil enforcement, and penalties against persons who violate the State's rules and regulations. Without these proposed changes, the State's only recourse is too often limited to criminal prosecution.

- **Standardizing the Definition of “Employer”:** Workers are too often the victims of wage theft, misclassification, and other misdeeds by employers who cannot be held accountable. This bill will create a standard definition of “employer” in the Employment Standards and Conditions Title. It will ensure that employers are not shielded from liability for wage theft and other violations.

<https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2022/011022.pdf>